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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0255
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0243
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3370
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1186
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1053
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1622
RUEHLN/AMCONSUL ST PETERSBURG 0062
RUEHVK/AMCONSUL VLADIVOSTOK 0001
RUEHYG/AMCONSUL YEKATERINBURG 0001
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2211
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UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000214

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, EUR/RUS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [RS](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: RUSSIAN EMBASSY "SOFT POWER" FALLS
A BIT FLAT

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) The Russian Embassy opened an exhibit at the National Art Museum on February 11 -- photographs of Turkmenistan taken by Russian Embassy diplomats. In his opening speech, Russian Ambassador Igor Blatov noted the exhibit coincides with the first anniversary of President Gurbanguly Myalikgulyevich Berdimuhamedov's election. His translator mangled the president's name and had to try three times to get it out. Blatov added that the exhibit, even more importantly, is in honor of Russian Diplomatic Workers' Day. He noted, "Most countries don't honor their diplomatic workers, so we invite you to join us for this celebration."

13. (SBU) Apart from Russian Embassy employees and local culture-vultures, the turn-out was rather sparse. Deputy Foreign Minister Vepa Hajiyevev and several Ministry of Culture representatives attended from the Government of Turkmenistan.

Blatov walked off the stage before introducing the host-government officials, and so a Ministry of Culture representative asked to take the microphone to declare the exhibit open, but the microphone was already turned off. The only diplomats who attended, other than the Charge, were the Iranian DCM who is a happy-go-lucky glad-hander, the ever-glowing DCM of Belarus, the Polish Ambassador, the Turkish DCM, and the Tajikistani Ambassador who will attend anything if there's the possibility of a buffet and open bar.

However, the buffet was decidedly downscale, and only a few die-hards stayed for it. The bar closed after the first round of drinks. Charge noticed the bartenders then slugging back the vodka.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: The concept was a good idea -- diplomats celebrate the host country. And several of the photos were above snap-shot quality. But all in all, the opening seemed to lack the elan and professionalism one would expect from a

polished public diplomacy event. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND